

Tiananmen Anniversary: Local leaders mark ‘forgotten’ massacre

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Causeway Bay Books manager Lam Wing-kei observes a moment of silence at a candlelight vigil at Liberty Square in Taipei yesterday commemorating the 31st anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing.

Photo: CNA

Local officials and public figures across party lines yesterday commemorated the 31st anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre while highlighting democratic values and the importance of learning from history.

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) posted on Facebook a photograph of a calendar page for June 4, saying that every year, one day in China is “forgotten.”

“While Taiwan had similar issues, we rediscovered these forgotten days, because we no longer need to keep historical truths hidden, allowing us more time to ponder the future,” Tsai wrote in Chinese.

She expressed her hope for no part of the world to have certain days removed from memory and said: “A free Taiwan supports the freedom of Hong Kong.”

Legislative Speaker You Si-kun (游錫堃) expressed regret for all those who were killed in Beijing on June 4, 1989, as well as for pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong.

“We must cherish our democracy and also concern ourselves with those who do not yet enjoy democracy,” You told reporters.

He called on other democratic nations to jointly pressure Beijing into enacting reforms and allowing self-determination for Chinese.

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Separately, former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) on Facebook repeated his annual call for Beijing to face history and make amends for the massacre.

Freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are Taiwan's core values, Ma wrote, adding that Beijing pursuing the concepts would bring Taiwan and China closer, and help resolve its conflict with Hong Kong.

On Wednesday, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Johnny Chiang (江啟元) also urged Beijing to face the ghost of its past, and answer the calls for political reforms, democracy and liberty that the massacre represents.

The KMT supports the promotion of democracy, liberty and human rights, and it would not be blind, deaf, or mute about what it knows is the truth, Chiang said, adding that the party continues to believe in the goals it stated in 1989 of democratizing politics and liberalizing the economy.

At a Taipei City Council meeting yesterday, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) said that the massacre was a tragedy of the modern era, and that he believed China would inevitably embrace democracy.

The Taipei City Government has been in talks with the Shanghai branch of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, with both sides leaning toward holding this year's Taipei-Shanghai twin-city forum via teleconference, Ko said, adding that the choice of software was still being discussed.

Suddenly halting the forum, which has been held for more than a decade, would set back relations, Ko said, adding that a platform must exist for mutual goodwill to be expressed.

In a radio interview yesterday, Hong Kong dissident and bookstore owner Lam Wing-kei (林榮基) said that he supports Taiwan's stance of doing more than saying.

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Lam's bookstore, Causeway Bay Books (灣仔書店) — named after the bookstore he managed in Hong Kong — opened in Taipei on April 25.

China is set on "reclaiming" Hong Kong, a goal evident since the beginning of anti-extradition bill protests, Lam said.

Taipei has helped nearly 300 Hong Kong pro-democracy activists without loudly trumpeting its efforts, which is smart, Lam said, expressing the hope that the government would allow Hong Kongers to stay in Taiwan for longer than six months.

Lam yesterday afternoon attended a news conference held by the New Power Party to mark the anniversary and its support for Hong Kong.

Hong Kongers should protect themselves and leave the territory if they feel that it is not safe there, and stay in Taiwan to save their energy for the long-term fight against China, he said.

Additional reporting by Shen Pei-yao, Chung Li-hua and Wu Su-wei

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